

ON SUCH SHORT NOTICE, I thought this article might prove helpful in your preparation. Please, note especially the author's summary of Christian influence on the founding fathers (on the second page):

The following excerpts are taken from:

<http://www.heritage.org/research/lecture/2011/06/did-america-have-a-christian-founding>

In order to answer the question “Did America have a Christian Founding?” properly, we must first understand it. Let us begin by considering what, exactly, **would constitute a *Christian Founding***?

1. **One possibility is simply that the Founders *identified* themselves as Christians.** Clearly, they did. In 1776, every European American, with the exception of about 2,500 Jews, identified himself or herself as a Christian. Moreover, approximately 98 percent of the colonists were Protestants, with the remaining 1.9 percent being Roman Catholics.^[3]
2. **Second, we might mean that the Founders were all *sincere* Christians.** Yet sincerity is very difficult for the scholars, or anyone else, to judge. In most cases, the historical record gives us little with which to work. And even if we can determine, say, that a particular Founder was a member, regular attendee, and even officer in a church, it does not necessarily mean he was a *sincere* Christian. Perhaps he did these things simply because society expected it of him.
3. **Third, we might mean that the Founders were *orthodox* Christians.** In some cases—for example, Samuel Adams, Patrick Henry, John Jay, Roger Sherman, and John Witherspoon—there is abundant evidence that these Founders embraced and articulated orthodox Christian ideas. But the lack of records often makes it difficult to speak with confidence on this issue.
4. **A fourth possibility is that the Founders *acted* as Christians in their private and/or public lives.** Some historians have argued that the Founding cannot be called Christian because some Founders did not join churches, take communion, or remain faithful to their spouses. Moreover, in their public capacity, they did not act in a Christian manner because they did things such as fight an unjust war against England and did not immediately abolish slavery.
5. **A final possibility is that the Founders were *influenced* by Christian ideas.** I believe that this is the most reasonable way to approach the question “Did America have a *Christian Founding*?” In doing so, it is important to note that nominal Christians might be influenced by Christian ideas, just as it is possible for an orthodox Christian to be influenced by non-Christian ideas. I believe that an excellent case can be made that Christianity had a profound influence on the Founders.

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Even though Christianity is not mentioned in the Constitution or Bill of Rights, the Founders of the American republic were influenced by Christian ideas in significant ways. For example:

1. **Their faith taught them that humans were sinful.** As James Madison wrote in *Federalist* No. 51, “If men were angels, no government would be necessary. If angels were to govern men, neither external or internal controls on government would be necessary.” This conviction led them to avoid utopian experiments such as those later pursued during the French Revolution and to adopt a constitutional system characterized by separated powers, checks and balances, and federalism. Many Enlightenment thinkers in this era, by way of contrast, tended to favor a strong, centralized government run by experts.
2. **They firmly believed that God ordained moral standards, that legislation should be made in accordance with these standards, and that moral laws took precedence over human laws.** This conviction manifests itself in their abstract reflections (e.g., James Wilson’s law lectures, parts of which read like St. Thomas Aquinas’s *Summa Theologica*) and practical decisions (e.g., all but one Supreme Court Justice prior to John Marshall argued publicly that the Court could strike down an act of Congress if it violated natural law).
3. Similarly, Christianity informed the Founders’ understanding of substantive concepts such as “liberty.” Barry Shain has identified eight different ways in which the word was used in the 18th century. Only one of these is related to the excessively individualistic way the term is often used today. **Instead, the Founders were far more likely to see liberty as the freedom to do what is morally correct,** as illustrated by United States Supreme Court Justice James Wilson’s marvelous dictum: “Without liberty, law loses its nature and its name, and becomes oppression. Without law, liberty also loses its nature and its name, and becomes licentiousness.”
4. **America’s Founders believed that humans were created in the *imago dei*—the image of God.** Part of what this means is that humans are reasonable beings. This led them to conclude that we the people (as opposed to the elite) can order our public lives together through politics rather than force. It also helped inform early (and later) American opposition to slavery.
5. **Faith led many Founders to conclude that religious liberty should be extensively protected.** Yet many also thought that civic authorities should encourage Christianity and that it is appropriate to use religious language in the public square. By the late 18th century, some Founders were beginning to question the wisdom of religious establishments, primarily because they thought that such establishments hurt true religion. The Founders’ views on these questions have the most immediate and obvious policy and legal implications, so I will address them in some detail.....[see article for further details]